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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the relationship between national identity and language in Spanish-speaking Latin America focuses on issues concerning indigenous languages, education, and literacy. The sociolinguistic history and configuration Spanish-speaking Latin America are outlined briefly, noting the influences of indigenous populations, non-Spanish immigrant languages, the influx of African-born slaves, and the influence of English. Language policy supporting castilianization and adoption of Spanish as the official language in most countries is also reviewed. Situations in individual countries are examined briefly. A look at the situation in modern Latin America finds a persistence of Spanish colonial influences, coupled with delayed attention to literacy and education, particularly for indigenous populations. It is concluded that while these populations have generally opted for education in Spanish, probably because Spanish is widely perceived as a vehicle of social mobility and political power, marginalization and alienation have grown. It is suggested that greater attention needs to be given to the complex relationship of language and national identity. (MSE)

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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE IN MULTI-ETHNIC LATIN AMERICA

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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE IN MULTI-ETHNIC LATIN AMERICA

Clare Mar-Molinero

Introduction

Spanish, or Castilian[1], is a world language spoken today by over 350 million people, for the vast majority as their first language. In the place of its origin, Spain, its role as an essential marker in the evolution of Spanish nationalism is similar to that of many languages in Western European nation-states. The part that Spanish has played in the construction of national identity in the nations of Latin America is somewhat different. Here, as language of the colonisers, Spanish cannot claim a 'natural' right to be the national language. It is, nonetheless, the national and/or official language of the majority of Latin American nations. In this paper I will examine how this has come about, what the relationship between Spanish and other, particularly indigenous, languages is, and in what way this contributes to our understanding of the relationship between language and nationalism, and how this is reflected in education and literacy programmes.

Before attempting to answer some of these questions, it is necessary to sketch a brief picture of the sociolinguistic situation of Spanish-speaking Latin America. (see, e.g., Diez et al, 1980:117-135) While the role of English, French, and Portuguese in the colonising of the Americas has both parallel and contrasting features, for the purposes of this paper, I shall only examine the nations of the former Spanish empire. I will not be discussing the situation of the large and significant group of Spanish speakers who now form part of the U.S. population, nor of the island of Puerto Rico, given its special U.S. status.[2]

The sociolinguistic configuration of Spanish-speaking Latin America

Spanish is spoken by a significant part of the population -- significant for its size or for its status -- in Mexico; the Central American states of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama; on the Caribbean Islands of Cuba and the Dominican Republic; and in the South American states of Colombia, Venezuela, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. Under the Spanish Empire these eighteen independent states formed part of far larger political groupings, being divided into four Viceroyalties, and were not considered separate discrete nations. They were conceived by the Spaniards as part of a greater imperial *Hispanidad*, but had in fact brought together indigenous empires and ethnic communities whose borders were different again from those of the colonial or post-colonial periods. The emergence, then, of separate states during the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century involved the development of separate national identities for these countries. Language was to play an ambiguous role in this assertion of nationalism, representing as it does the language of the former coloniser and of union rather than diversity. However, insofar as the elites, composed of creoles of white European descent, were in the main merely substituting one form of Europeanised culture and concepts of society with another, the fact that a European language should be the language of government and the state was never in real doubt. This language was of course Spanish, even where attempts were made to particularise a variety of it to characterise a specific state. As Anderson writes,

> (...) whether we think of Brazil, the USA, or the former colonies of Spain, language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropoles. All, including the USA, were creole states, formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought. Indeed, it is fair to say that language was never even an issue in these early struggles for

national liberation. (Anderson, 1983:50)

Alongside Spanish in many Latin American states, to a greater or lesser degree, can also be found indigenous Amerindian languages. There exists a wide variety of these languages, isolated as their speakers have been by geography, lack of access to communications systems, and by political, social and economic oppression. At the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, hierarchies between these languages also existed with languages such as Quechua (of the Inca Empire), Nahualt (of the Aztec Empire) or Mayan enjoying the status of a lingua franca across large areas.

The presence of large groups speaking these pre-colonial languages is still significant today in the Andean states, parts of the Amazonian basin, most of the Central American states, and Mexico. These groups are in their great majority underprivileged, second class citizens in the imposed state within which they live. In other Latin American states, such as Argentina or Cuba, the original indigenous populations have been more or less wiped out.

These are not, however, the only influences in modern Latin American linguistic contexts. At least three other features need to be borne in mind. The first is the extent to which other, non-Spanish immigrant languages have left their mark, such as the Italian speakers in Argentina; various tight-knit German speaking communities (e.g. in Paraguay or Venezuela); the groups of Spanish immigrants who in fact brought their own non-Castilian language with them, such as Galician, Basques or Catalans; and the more recent arrival from the Far East of speakers of Japanese, Chinese or other Asian languages. To some extent these groups have influenced the form of Spanish that they have been integrated with, particularly as far as lexical and phonological features are concerned.

The second important factor to influence the language situation is the large influx of African-born slaves during the years of the Empire, and in some cases, beyond. again, not all Latin American states have been permanently influenced by this group in terms of language, although most show their influence in terms of race. Only in the areas where these populations were most highly concentrated, such as the Caribbean and parts of the Atlantic Coast of Central America, has the phenomena of pidgin and creole languages developed by the slaves left its mark.

In present day Latin America a third factor is of great importance to the linguistic characteristics and that is the influence of English. Not only English as a world language which is dominating all parts of the world in terms of economic power and technological advancement, but more particularly, the English of the U.S. because of its very dominating and overbearing influence on its less developed southern neighbours. In the nineteenth century the British controlled much of the economic power in Latin America (building railways and owning mines and large stretches of agricultural land) making English a status symbol amongst the ruling classes. But now it is not only the elites of Latin American states who are exposed to the need to know (above all U.S.) English, in urban areas its use in the media (especially television and advertising) bring even the poorest in contact with it.

The *Castilianisation* of Latin America

It is impressive how such a large geographical area with such a sizeable non-Spanish speaking population could, by the time of independence from Spain, have become so castilianised in terms, at least, of the dominant language. However, the language policies of the Empire had laid firm foundations for this process. These policies were to a large extent bound up with the role of religion in the colonising of Latin America. Initially the Spanish missionaries saw the sense of learning native languages and teaching Christianity through these. Up until the time of their expulsion from Latin America the Jesuits, in particular, were solid defenders of the language and culture of the indigenous population. However, the original imperial decrees

that priests should learn the indigenous languages lapsed by default as these people preferred to use native interpreters, a group who were also widely used by the Spanish administrators of the colonies. As time went by, too, the colonisers saw the importance of castilianising the local native nobility and thereby gradually assimilating it into western ways.

It is not however until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the use of Spanish and a thorough castilinisation of the conquered peoples became the official Spanish policy. The reasons for this, besides the common ones amongst colonising powers to impose their language, their culture and their dominance, included also the notion, argued by some, that Spanish, rather than an indigenous language, only was capable of transmitting the ideas and concepts of Christianity. A reason particular to Spain, also, was the increasing goal, especially of the Bourbon Spanish kings of the eighteenth century, to centralise and hegemonise all things Spanish by the dominance of Castile. It was not only the clergy in remote parts of Latin America who were instructed to use Castilian, but also those in Catalonia. By 1767, too, the Jesuits had been expelled from Latin America.

Part of the official castilianising language policies was to set up schools in rural areas to educate the indigenous population through Spanish. These schools seldom materialised, however, partly through lack of resources, partly because the local elites were not keen on the captive workforce being educated, or both. The use, therefore, of local languages continued much as before, while Spanish became firmly entrenched as the language of government, the Church, high culture and the dominating classes. Bilingualism of course did start to develop, both as the result of racial intermixing and the Indians' need for survival.

One critical difference, also, between Spanish and the indigenous languages was the fact that Spanish had a highly developed written form, making wider communications quicker. The role of literacy and its ambiguous status for the Latin American indigenous population remains a dilemma today, which I shall return to later. But even at the time of independence it has been argued that literacy, or specifically the 'print-word' was important in the construction of national identity. This is a theme well developed by Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983) where he argues that print language was instrumental in supporting the awakening nationalist movements of Europe's eighteenth and nineteenth century history. And while he notes that English in North America and Spanish in Latin America do not operate in the same way as European linguistic nationalism, the effect of the printed word is to create models and concepts which do in fact underpin the various nationalist independence movements in Latin America. He writes,

> (...) the independence movements in the Americas became, as soon as they were printed about, 'concepts', 'models' and indeed 'blueprints'. In 'reality', Bolivar's fears of Negro insurrections and San Martin's summoning of his indigenes to Peruvianness jostled one another chaotically. But printed words washed away the former almost at once, so that, if recalled at all, it appeared an inconsequential anomaly. Out of the American welter came these imagined realities: nation-states; republican institutions, common citizenship, popular sovereignty, national flags, and anthems, etc., and the liquidation of their conceptual opposites: dynastic empires, monarchical institutions, absolutisms, subjecthoods, inherited nobilities, serfdoms, ghettoes, and so forth. (...) Furthermore, the validity and generalizability of the blueprint were undoubtedly confirmed by the *plurality* of the independent states. (Anderson 1983:78)

Spanish, then, having established itself as the dominant language throughout the Spanish Empire in the Americas, and particularly with its role as a written form of communication and vehicle for ideas, helped form the early inspiration for national identity in the emerging independent republics.

Education, although largely restricted to the ruling classes, also helped to spread the values of a castilianised/Westernised world. As Campos Carr writes,

> The history of education in Latin America demonstrates that it has always been used to colonize and propagate the dominant ideology -- the European one. During the colonial period, Spain's educational policy reflected the perspective of an imperial power. It created an elite, both lay and religious, which denied the value of native culture and history, and superimposed the values of the *conquistadores*.
>
> After independence, education became the means for 'national integration' for each country, an attempt to unify a sometimes very diverse population under the allegiance of one flag. Education has remained, nevertheless, the product of the social class that has dominated each period. (Campos Carr, 1990:51)

Language policies in independent Latin America

As a desire for independence from Spain grew, heightened by the Latin American colonies' frustration with the incompetence and ineffectiveness of a Spain recently annexed by Napoleon, it was inevitable that separate nations would be created from the amorphous Empire (see Lynch, 1973). The political divisions of the Empire, the geographical conditions of separation, size, and economic rivalries, all led to the emergence of independent republics. In the mapping of these independence movements language obviously did not play a part as national identity marker since all the former colonies by now used Spanish as their dominant language. In this sense the nationalism movements were very different from parallel ones taking place then in Europe where ideas such as those inspired by the German philosopher Herder were preaching the supreme role of language as the soul of the nation and the essence of its people. However, in the drafting and re-drafting of national constitutions over the following century, many of these republics would see the need for recognising Spanish as their national or official language, thereby giving it importance in the formulation of national identity.

Today ten of the Latin American states that were former Spanish colonies enshrine in a current Constitution the status of Spanish or Castilian (Alvar, 1986). The majority of these refer to Spanish as the 'official' language, but in some states Spanish is referred to in legal decrees as the 'national' language. Clearly in such manifestly multi-ethnic societies the distinction between these two terms is extremely important. In those states where 'national' is used, such as Paraguay, Ecuador and Peru, the term 'national' is now used to refer to indigenous languages as well. Alvar (1986) makes a clear distinction between these two terms:

> (...) lengua oficial sería la que un Estado tiene como propia para la publicación de todos sus instrumentos legales, y, en determinados países, la que de entre todas las lenguas nacionales sirve como instrumento de comunicación para los ciudadanos que hablan diversidad de lenguas regionales. Según esto, nacionales son todas las lenguas que se hablan en los territorios de un país, pero oficial sólo es una (...) (Alvar, 1986: 300)[1]

By this definition he also, however, implies that the official language will be that of the

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[1] ...official language would be that which a State considers appropriate for the publication of all its legal instruments, and, in certain countries, the one which, amongst all the national ones, serves as the means of communication for the citizens who speak a variety of regional languages. According to this, national languages are all those which are spoken within a country's borders, but the official one is only one.

Constitution of any state (as the language of the 'instrumento legal'), which clearly makes Spanish the official language of all the former Spanish colonies, as they were all to draft Constitutions written in Spanish. Certainly, in the case of Mexico, while not proclaiming any particular status for Spanish, the constitution does state that only Spanish can be used for purposes of government and law (Cifuentes, 1992).

Constitutions, it can be argued, form part of the national consciousness by enshrining rights and duties of a nation's members, but it also establishes citizenship, and these rights and duties are only accessible if citizenship can be attained and understood. Those members of a state who do not speak the official language are in danger of being disenfranchised; and those who do not read the legal documents issued in this language may well be considered second class citizens, if citizens at all. In very many of the original constitutions of the early nineteenth century citizenship and its associated rights were limited to those who could read and write. With the realization that the states could not or would not deliver the necessary education to allow substantial parts of their populations reach this goal, the constitutions were gradually amended. (Alvar, 1986) The implications of this for literacy and bilingual education programmes even today will be discussed later.

The status of languages in the Paraguayan constitutions has always reflected the very different situation of the main indigenous language in this former Spanish colony compared with all the other Latin American ones. Largely as a result of the fact that this was where the Jesuits had their headquarters until they were forced to leave the Americas, Guarani enjoyed and has continued to enjoy a prestige and acceptance that no other pre-colonial language has known. Even amongst the creole class and in the urban areas, there are few, even today, who are totally monolingual in Spanish alone. Guarani enjoys a special place as the language of Paraguayanness, even while Spanish is the language of government and official public use. 'Guarani is (...) a prerequisite for status as a genuine Paraguayan' (Fasold, 1984:15). The social stigma attached to using and learning other indigenous languages has not occurred with Guarani. The castilianisation process was not so strong here and did not replace the more usual equation of national identity marked by national (i.e. 'ethnic') language.

More recently in Peru, legislation has attempted to upgrade the major non-Spanish languages spoken here. First, in 1975 Quechua was proclaimed a co-official national language. But the failure of the radical military administration of 1968-75 to impose indigenist changes on the nation also meant that this legislation was replaced by 1980 by a law which gave co-official status with Spanish to Quechua or Aymara in designated regions (Cerrón-Palamino, 1989). As I have argued on various occasions (e.g. Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 1991, Mar-Molinero, forthcoming) the use of the Territoriality Principle to assign language rights is a questionable one, restricting languages, as it does, to confined and often insignificant areas. In the case of Peru this language legislation denies the very important existence of Quechua and Aymara in the urban areas, and in particular, Lima, to which much of the indigenous population has been forced to migrate.

In the main, nonetheless, language policies of post-colonial Latin American states can be said to have shaped societies where increasingly monolingualism amongst indigenous speakers has given way to bilingualism or monolingualism in Spanish only. The reasons for this reflect the awareness on the part of these states to create a sense of national unity in states which were, on the whole, multi-ethnic, or, put another way, composed of many nations. Besides being the language of public administration, education, religion, etc. -- the typical 'High' functions -- Spanish also served as a lingua franca in commercial transactions between indigenous groups with different non-Spanish languages. Increasingly, therefore, it was seen as the language of economic survival and of social mobility. Monolingualism in an indigenous language confirmed dispossession and under-privilege.

By the twentieth century, then, it could be said that language had become a factor in creating national identity. Spanish was used, not as a marker of ethnicity, as a nation's soul, as proposed by the European Romantics, but as an imposed form of national unifier. In this sense the non-Spanish speaking communities of Latin America shared with the Catalans, the Basques and the Galicians the effects of a centralising linguistic policy aimed at legitimising one dominant language. Where the difference lies is with the fact that the non-Spanish speaking communities of Spain were, in numerical terms, minorities within the Spanish population. In Latin America communities who did not have Spanish as their mother tongue were very often the largest groups in their respective state (e.g. in Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala). The description of 'minority group' is often used to refer to the indigenous groups because of their marginalised situation in society and not because of their numbers.

Modern Latin America

The pressure to learn and use Spanish throughout the former Spanish colonies has increased even more strongly throughout the twentieth century. The typical consequences of modernisation, slow though it has been to come to many parts of Latin America, is the main explanation. Internationalised economic markets, advanced technological media and communications and, especially, migration to urban areas has led to an increase in the need to learn Spanish. As development and modernisation produce major social changes, the ensuing marginalisation of large sections of Latin America's poor (often non-mother tongue speakers of Spanish) needs to be addressed through education and literacy programmes. However, these same programmes raise difficult questions about identity, and particularly national identity for those whose native culture is very different from the Westernised culture of most Latin American states' elites.

Up until well into this century the provision of education in Latin American states has generally been woeful. To some extent this was deliberate where the elites felt that an undereducated class -- mostly indigenous people -- provided a subservient and exploitable workforce. Even as provision improved, however, it often reflected the state's desire to mould its people into a 'proper' westernised culture and way of being. Education is always an important weapon in the business of constructing a national hegemony. As Graff (1994) says,

> It is important to stress the integrating and hegemony-creating functions of literacy provision through formal schooling. Especially with the transition from pre-industrial social orders based in rank and deference to the class societies of commercial and then factory capitalism, schooling became more and more a vital aspect of the maintenance of social stability, particularly during periods of massive, but often poorly understood, social and economic change. Many persons, most prominently social and economic leaders and social reformers, grasped the uses of schooling and the vehicle of literacy for the promotion of the values, attitudes, and habits considered essential to the maintenance of social order and the persistence of integration and cohesion. (Graff, in Maybin, 1994:160)

While the learning of Spanish was in the main through contact and necessity and not through schooling, as more education became available, its aim was certainly to assimilate all the population into westernised cultural value systems. Referring to educational programmes in Peru at the beginning of the century, Portocarrero (1992) writes,

> The school taught the indigenous children that Peru was a Western and Christian country and that the *criollo* modernity represented the future. Simultaneously, it transmitted the belief that the indigenous culture was synonymous with a decrepit and backward world condemned to disappear, giving place to evolution and progress. For

> the indigenous children, school was and still is a traumatic experience that humiliates them and where they learn to deny their culture and admire the culture of others. (Portocarrero, 1992: 74-73)

The Freirean notion of education as a form of 'banking' is appropriate here where the dominant cultural norms are 'deposited' in order to be 'cashed' as the child becomes an adult member of the society (e.g. Freire, 1972). While Freire was observing poor Portuguese-speaking, usually urban, Brazilians, his critique of the oppression created by education is just as valuable when looking at the range of Spanish-speaking Latin American societies. His own methods -- of developing a sociopolitical awareness through the use of dialogue and participation in the learning process -- have been used in many parts of Latin America when radical governments have wanted to reform and revolutionise the integration of their underprivileged classes into their societies. Even in countries who have not deliberately set out to sensitise learners to the political issues of the society around them, an awareness has nonetheless developed with increased knowledge and educational access. Again, talking about Peru in particular, Portocarrero describes a situation which has occurred in various places,

> Education was [often] traditional in its methods and ehnocentric in its context but inadvertently subversive in its sociopolitical consequences. As education expanded, the school eroded the power of the traditional bosses and Andean feudalism. In some cases, teachers became agents of social mobilization. When students began to internalize their Peruvian identity, they also internalized the idea of having rights. (Portocarrero, 1992:76)

As we have seen already, literacy plays an important part in the construction of national identity in the relatively new states of Latin America, as issues of citizenship and legal rights are bound up with it. The modernisation of the late twentieth century has made this form of access to power even more important. And as Street (1994) has said 'the acquisition of a particular set of literacy practices, while clearly associated with particular cultural identities, may actually be a focus for transformation and challenge' (Sreet, in Maybin, 1994:142). Literacy programmes, and in particular those of the Freirean kind, can help previously disenfranchised groups both to become more integrated into the political processes of their society, and to be made more aware of their own identities. This may actually challenge some of their own values, such as, attitudes to the role of women. The experience of literacy campaigns in such places as Nicaragua, Chile and Bolivia have certainly demonstrated this.

Again, the issue of language, in the development of literacy and its relationship to identity, is important. The earliest forms of literacy programmes in Latin America could fairly be said to be indistinguishable from castilianisation programmes. The aim was to teach literacy in order to teach the indigenous population Spanish -- the language of the state. However, recent programmes have been more ambiguous about issues of language and literacy. Some, like the highly acclaimed Nicaraguan Sandinista literacy programme, had originally failed to see the important link between literacy-language-identity, and sought to teach literacy through only Spanish to groups for whom Spanish was not their mother tongue. The consequence of this mistake was near-disastrous, as the very policy of empowerment through literacy made these people more aware of their differences and therefore the lack of recognition of this from the central government. In other places, such as Ecuador and Bolivia, literacy was promoted through indigenous languages (see Archer and Costello 1991), but raised other difficult questions. Westernised literacy concepts are based, of course, on a written tradition; does this make sense for languages with entirely oral traditions? Will these peoples ever have need to read or write in their non-Spanish languages? Certainly there is little or no written literature, no newspapers or instructions on food packages or medicines in their languages. The argument is that with literacy they would begin to write and read in their own languages,

and certainly a factor in this is the enormous migration of indigenous people to the cities. Will they use their native languages for urban, Western ways? Keeping in contact with their families in rural areas had led to the need to write letters (and to have them read). Is this a possible motive for increasing literacy in indigenous languages, or does one assume that eventually modern technology in the form of telephones will make this unnecessary before it has really happened? Certainly a new form of literacy which has played a major role in positive attitudes towards using and favouring indigenous languages has been in areas where radio broadcasting in these languages has become an important form of communication. (For the example of Guatemala, see Archer & Costello, 1990) As the division between urban and rural life becomes more blurred, with the inevitable expansion of modern technological forms of communications and transportation, such media as radio and television (even computers) will increasingly challenge reading/writing literacies. It may well be that the oral traditions of much of Latin America's indigenous population is more suited to these forms of literacy than the traditional forms of reading and writing. As Graff (1994) writes,

> The past misconstrual of the meanings and contributions of literacy are rooted in the ideological origins of Western society. Expectations and assumptions of the primacy and priority of literacy and print for society and individual, the necessity of 'functional' skills for survival (whatever they might be), or the mass condition of literacy as an index of the condition of civilization -- all have been guiding assumptions that have obscured a deeper, more grounded understanding of the complexities of literacy. (Graff, in Maybin, 1994:151)

The literacy programmes, however, have shown that in terms of these 'functional' skills, in such places as Guatemala and Bolivia, that the indigenous population want to learn through Spanish, the language they perceive as the vehicle of social mobility and access to power structures. The desire and need to be part of the political system around them, even where this may mean adopting certain culturally foreign ways, has become an imperative for many of Latin America's dispossessed indigenous people. Bilingual education programmes which allow for proper parallel treatment of both languages and cultures is clearly an ideal objective that could help to satisfy the need both to have access through the knowledge of Spanish, and to maintain the indigenous mother tongue and cultural baggage. Examples of good practice in this respect are few and far between -- notably in parts of Mexico -- and have tended instead to be simply assimilationist programmes aimed at transferring the learner at the earliest stage from their mother tongue to a nomolingual programme in Spanish.

The recent events and uprising in Chiapas in Mexico illustrates the alienation that the indigenous populations can feel only too clearly. In an article for a Spanish magazine the well-known Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes writes of the Chiapas situation:

> El pueblo de Chiapas se ha dado cuenta de la inminencia de un terrible cambio. Durante siglos, los chiapanecos han sido explotados. Pero durante el milenio que se inicia, sólo serán marginados. Creo que prefieren ser explotados que marginados, olvidados, abandonados al azar y a la muerte, bajo el esquema tecnocrático de una aldea global integrada. (Fuentes, 1994:56)[2]

Fuentes is referring to the global trend which is putting pressures on discrete national boundaries. As economic, cultural and technological marketplaces go beyond national

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[2] The people of Chiapas have realised the imminence of a terrible change. For centuries these people have been exploited. But in the millennium which is starting, they will only be marginalised. I think that they would rather be exploited than marginalised, forgotten, abandoned to fortune and to death, under the technocratic scheme of an integrated global village.

frontiers, so too do linguistic demarcations, as can be seen with the expansion and domination of English as a world language too. Spanish is also a world language, and as we have seen has only ever been partially tied down to specific national identities in Latin America. There have been attempts to distinguish the Spanish of, say, Mexico as sufficiently different from anywhere else as to call it 'mexicano'. Many of the Latin American states have their own Language Academies (loosely linked to Spain's Royal Academy). Certainly different identifying accents and vocabulary uses have developed in the various Latin American states, but neither these nor the Spanish of Spain has ceased to be manifestly recognisable and comprehensible as part of one and the same language. And this shared language has led to moves, paralleling those seen generally in the global village scenario, to forge a supranational identity of pan-hispanidad amongst these Spanish speakers. The present *Comunidad Iberoamericana de Naciones* is seen by some as a counterweight to the economic and cultural influence of the United States, or to the emerging European Union. Spain's exact role in this is ambiguous, and it may well be that finally the Latin American states do really throw off the yoke of European influence and exclude Spain from this union.

Such a supra-national organisation seeks homogeneity and serves to emphasise the similarities between the states which are largely those of the legacy of European colonizers: their political and economic values, religion, culture, and language. It is small wonder that the indigenous groups feel as marginalised as ever; the difference is that modern technological media, such as television, has made it much easier for them to appreciate the inequalities. This knowledge is a small step forward in the empowerment of the indigenous and underprivileged in Latin America, full provision of education, literacy and political rights would properly recognise their role in the construction of the Latin American nations' identity rather than the previous crude attempts to assimilate and thereby annihilate their cultural identities. To construct this truly multicultural society there is a need for a far greater awareness of the role of language and its complicated relationship with national identity.

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NOTES

1. The terms 'Spanish' or 'Castilian' are used interchangeably here. However, parts of the Spanish-speaking world do use them differently, and there have been interesting studies undertaken to investigate the significance of these different uses and the attitudes that they entail (see, especially, Alvar, 1986: chapter 3).

2. For an overview of the *Hispanics* in the U.S. see, e.g., Coulmas, 1990. A good summary of the situation of Spanish in Puerto Rico is provided in Vélez & Schweers, 1993.

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